

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 SPC-01 SAL-01 NSC-10 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 L-02 IO-03

DRC-01 PRS-01 /058 W

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P R 211741Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9119

INFO GOV PANCANAL

USCINCSO

S E C R E T PANAMA 6286

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PN PFOR

SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR PANAMANIAN ACTION AGAINST U.S. PRESENCE IN
THE CANAL ZONE

REF. STATE: 218950

SUMMARY. THE JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (JIC) MET NOVEMBER
19 AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRC TO DISCUSS
PROSPECTS FOR PANAMANIAN ACTION AGAINST THE CANAL ZONE ON
JANUARY 9. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS DOES NOT NOW
CONTEMPLATE OR DESIRE SUCH ACTION. THE MEMORANDUM FROM THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE JIC TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRC CONCERNING
"PROSPECTS FOR PANAMANIAN ACTION AGAINST U.S. PRESENCE IN THE
CANAL ZONE ON OR ABOUT JANUARY 9, 1974" IS PROVIDED BELOW.
END SUMMARY.

1. QUOTE IT IS THE CONSENSUS OF THE JIC THAT AT THIS TIME
THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA (GOP) DOES NOT EXPECT OR DESIRE
A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES ON THE
JANUARY 9 ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1964 STUDENT RIOT IN THE CANAL
ZONE. GENERAL TORRIJOS BELIEVES THAT SUCH A CONFRONTATION WOULD

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NOT BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF PANAMA. INDICATIONS ARE THAT

TORRIJOS, NEVERTHELESS, FEELS PERSONAL FRUSTRATION OVER HAVING TO "FACE HIS PEOPLE" ON JANUARY 9 AND NOT BEING ABLE TO SHOW THEM ANY TANGIBLE RESULTS ON A NEW CANAL TREATY FAVORABLE TO PANAMA. DURING THE PERIOD UP TO JANUARY 9, TORRIJOS WILL BE UNDER INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURES WHICH COULD SERVE TO INCREASE HIS FRUSTRATION AND CAUSE HIM TO ABANDON HIS PRESENT INCLINATION NOT TO HAVE A CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TORRIJOS' THINKING WILL BE HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER. IF HE VIEWS AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S VISIT AS POSITIVE IN TERMS OF ADVANCING PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS, IT IS LIKELY HE WILL MAINTAIN HIS PRESENT RESOLVE TO AVOID ANY VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES.

2. QUOTE ALTHOUGH TORRIJOS CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTROL THE STUDENTS AND OTHER NATIONALISTIC ELEMENTS, THE PRINCIPAL DANGER ON JANUARY 9 STEMS FROM THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS MIGHT INDEPENDENTLY TAKE DRAMATIC ACTION ON THIS DATE WHICH COULD PRECIPITATE A CONFRONTATION. SHOULD DEMONSTRATORS ENTER THE CANAL ZONE WITH THE INTENTION OF CAUSING A CONFRONTATION, IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT FOR THE GOP TO MOVE TO STOP THEM, ESPECIALLY IF FORCE WOULD BE REQUIRED. THE GOP RECOGNIZES THIS DANGER AND PLANS OFFICIAL JANUARY 9 CEREMONIES TO CHANNEL AND CONTROL THESE INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS. INTELLIGENCE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE DOES NOT INDICATE THAT THE STUDENTS OR ANYOTHER GROUPS ARE PLANNING ANY VIOLENT ANTI-UNITED STATES ACTIVITY FOR JANUARY 9. END QUOTE.

3. SOUTH J-2 BELIEVED THAT PARAGRAPH 1 ABOVE OVERSTATED TORRIJOS' SENSITIVITY AND POSSIBLE REACTION TO INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURES. J-2 BELIEVES THAT THE SECOND HALF OF PARAGRAPH ONE SHOULD READ AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE DURING THE PERIOD UP TO JANUARY 9, NO INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURES, OTHER THAN THOSE WHICH MIGHT DEVELOP FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S VISIT, ARE FORESEEN WHICH COULD CAUSE HIM TO ABANDON HIS PRESENT RESOLVE NOT TO HAVE A CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TORRIJOS' THINKING WILL BE HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER. IF HE VIEWS AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S VISIT AS POSITIVE IN TERMS OF ADVANCING PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS IT IS LIKELY HE WILL

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MAINTAIN HIS PRESENT RESOLVE TO AVOID ANY VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. END QUOTE.

4. COMMENT: PARAGRAPH TWO IMPLIES THAT THE GOP COULD ACT TO STOP DEMONSTRATORS ONCE THEY WERE IN THE CANAL ZONE, BUT IN REALITY THE GOP COULD NOT ACT BECAUSE THE ZONE IS UNDER U.S. JURISDICTION. PRC WILL BE CONSIDERING JIC ESTIMATE AT ITS NEXT MEETING.SAYRE

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